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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 001529

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/11/2013

TAGS: PHUM PGOV JO

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT OF JORDAN SOCIETY FOR CITIZENS' RIGHTS
LOSES COURT ACTION

REF: A. 02 AMMAN 6521

1B. 02 AMMAN 6154

1C. 02 AMMAN 5576

1D. 02 AMMAN 974

Classified By: AMBASSADOR EDWARD W. GNEHM. REASONS: 1.5 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY. Jordan Society for Citizens' Rights President Fawzi Samhoury has lost on his court action to have the JSCR reinstated as a society recognized by Jordanian law. On March 6 the Higher Court of Justice notified Samhoury at a court session that his case against the decision of the Ministry of Interior to dissolve the JSCR was denied. According to Samhoury, he has now exhausted all legal options and plans to wait until the summer before deciding how best to pursue his human rights work. END SUMMARY.

SAMHOURY LOSES COURT ACTION

12. (C) On March 11 PolOff met with a clearly disenchanted Samhoury. The Higher Court of Justice informed Samhoury's attorney at a March 6 session that Samhoury's action to stay the Ministry's decision to dissolve the JSCR had been denied. The Ministry of Justice dissolved the JSCR in October 2002, citing JSCR non-compliance with financial reporting requirements as the basis for the action (reftels). Samhoury did not attend the March 11 session, and said the court will mail his attorney a written decision in a couple of weeks. According to Samhoury, Legal options are now exhausted. He believes the Higher Court of Justice's decision to confirm the dissolution of the JSCR was politically driven.

WHAT TO DO NEXT

13. (C) Samhoury said he is not sure what to do next. He is clearly disappointed at the demise of his four year old JSCR. As he sees himself as one of the few independent human rights activists in Jordan, he has rejected suggestions that he join other human rights NGOs here. He plans to wait until the summer and decide if he will try to push forward with a new society. He is almost sure that the Ministry of Interior will reject any such attempt. On the GOJ's newly created human rights commission, Samhoury was dismissive. "They are all government people or weak people. I wrote Ahmad Obeidat (former PM and newly named ombudsman for the Human Rights Commission) a letter about my case a few months ago and he ignored me." Cynicism aside, Samhoury said he would probably file a complaint with the new commission once it is up and running. Samhoury also plans to continue his communication with Amnesty International and European media correspondents here.

COMMENT

14. (C) Although his case received extensive media coverage at the outset, attention has dwindled. There was no media coverage of the March 6 court session, with all eyes trained on the potential military action in Iraq. Given Samhoury's dedication, we expect him to continue to push forward with his human rights activism, despite the unfavorable court ruling.
GNEHM